

11-15-1996

## The Psychology of Counterintelligence: Felix Dzerzhinsky and Postmodernist Dilemma

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### Recommended Citation

Editor (1996) "The Psychology of Counterintelligence: Felix Dzerzhinsky and Postmodernist Dilemma," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 3 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol1/iss3/1>

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Title: The Psychology of Counterintelligence: Felix Dzerzhinsky and Postmodernist Dilemma

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Volume: 1

Issue: 3

Date: 1996-11-15

Keywords: counterintelligence, personnel security, postmodernism, trust

Government and business leaders, terrorist cells, and ponderous concatenations of organized crime all put a premium on security. Especially vital are obtaining and protecting information. Counterintelligence facilitates these endeavors through impeding one's putative and ersatz allies, one's real and imaginary adversaries, and one's mythical neutrals from their vital attempts at obtaining and protecting information. Their attempts include impeding one's own vital attempts at obtaining and protecting information, their attempts at impeding one's own vital attempts to impede their vital attempts, and on and on in an iterative process constrained only by wisdom, creativity, and paranoia.

Based on the above, the essence of counterintelligence may make a world of smoke and mirrors look like seeing forever on a clear day. This essence has become even further convoluted and involuted thanks to contributions from intellectual perspectives such as cultural science, constructivism, deconstructivism, hermeneutics, and semiotics. Their contributions include viewing concepts such as reality and causality as (1) mere hypothetical constructs far distant on some nomological net from an at best tenuous physical reality; (2) arbitrarily derived terms mirroring some delusional notion of social consensus; (3) totally projective and fecund with unspeakable conflicts and solipsistic meanings; (4) continuously negotiated products among interlocutors motivated to seek value, meaning, or, en attendant Godot, nothing at all; or as (5) mirroring a Zeitgeist which often is not contemporaneously apparent but must await analysis by cultural morticians, if not, cultural archaeologists.

All of these contributions and still others making the circuits of the salon and academia are sometimes all lumped together under the aegis of postmodernism. Although aging analysts may resonate with such a term that could presage a life after youth and generative maturity, a close reading brings much pessimism and, perhaps, nostalgia for previous eras in which "certainty" seemed more certain. To the counterintelligence professional, however, this close reading brings sheer terror. With notions of reality and causality under assault, how can one carry on business with any sincere sense of knowing what one is doing? At times like this, a security bureaucracy's penchant for inertia, ignorance, hubris, and inviolability in the guise of professionalism and wisdom may seem adaptive.

Let's take a specific case. One significant component of counterintelligence is personnel security, comprising the policies and procedures employed in selecting, training, and managing personnel to optimize their trustworthiness. The operational core of trustworthiness is supporting all iterations of obtaining and protecting information as approved by one's organization. And organizations often go to great lengths to identify life event and personality factors which have predictive validity for behaviors suggesting trustworthiness or, for that matter, untrustworthiness. These factors are overtly and covertly appraised during screening interviews, background and periodic investigations, tests, and the like. How interesting, then, that based on these factors, an individual who is arguably one of the greatest counterintelligence geniuses of the 20th century might not be employed today by a security bureaucracy.

Felix Dzerzhinsky is often cited by historians as the founder and/or first leader of what are generically termed variants of the Soviet security police-- the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (Vcheka,) then

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the State Political Administration (GPU,) lastly the United State Political Administration (OGPU.) It is said he exhibited a legendary single-mindedness of purpose in pursuing Soviet political goals, employed superlative management and administrative skills, and demonstrated unsurpassed ingenuity in developing counterintelligence techniques, viz., the front group. (His huge role in the "Red Terror" of murders and assassinations was viewed not as a crime by his boss, Lenin, but as a political necessity, which was discharged admirably.)

Yet Dzerzhinsky's life contains much which surely would raise red flags of security risk to counterintelligence experts of any era. He (1) was born of another nation and culture, Polish, not Russian, and was raised in a spirit of rigid Polish patriotism; (2) was born to a family with roots in a social class, the petit bourgeoisie, which later was one primary target of Soviet political violence; (3) experienced-- at age five-- the death of his father; (4) was imbued early on with a strict-- some would say fanatic-- Catholicism, almost entered a seminary, yet was to serve an officially atheistic regime, and may unconsciously have viewed his acceptance of Marxist-Leninist ideology as a religious conversion; (5) often displayed rage and a tempestuous anger; (6) seemed to have no value system and instead apparently needed to completely identify with a cause or all-encompassing ideology; (7) could ostensibly have good reason to hate Russia because of the noxious consequences for many Poles under Alexander III's Russification program; (8) was very intense, nervous, seemed to psychosomatize conflict, and had significant medical problems including tuberculosis; (9) had at least one period of academic difficulty wherein he failed in his studies, Russian of all things; and (10) may have experienced during his adolescence and through his idealism the sort of exploitation by a charismatic political leader (Moravsky) that counterintelligence experts seek to effect not be affected by.

And what counterintelligence expert would expect dispassionate analysis and systematic operational excellence from someone reputed to have said, "I can neither hate nor love by halves. I simply cannot give only half of my spirit. I either give all or nothing." Or this: "I loathe with every fiber all injustice, crime, drunkenness, depravity, excess, extravagance, brothels in which people sell their bodies or souls, or both; I detest oppression, fratricidal strife and national discord...I want to see humanity surrounded with love, to warm it and cleanse it of the filth of modern life." And yet this: "...And woe to the man who lacks the strength to overcome his feelings." And lastly this. "For me the end...can only be the grave."

Paradoxically, Dzerzhinsky stands not only as a case in point for the postmodernists who will deconstruct a term like trust at the drop of a hat and who could view him as an Anti-Trust who commanded The Trust. He also can serve as an avatar, a prisoner of unconscious emotions that may predictably fuel political behavior regardless of postmodernist protestations to the contrary. (See Author. (May 23 and July 12, 1990.) S.2726: To improve U.S. counterintelligence measures: Hearings. Clinton, W. J. (August 2, 1995.) Executive Order 12968. Access to classified information. Gerson, L. D. (1973.) The shield and the sword: Felix Dzerzhinskii and the establishment of the Soviet secret police. Doctoral dissertation. The George Washington University.) (Keywords: counterintelligence, personnel security, postmodernism, trust.)